

MARSHALL McLuhan: AN ANTHOLOGY CONCORDANCE / CATALOG OF HIS REPRINTED ESSAYS

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Article abstract

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MARSHALL McLuhan: AN ANTHOLOGY CONCORDANCE / CATALOG OF HIS REPRINTED ESSAYS

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Abstract: This is a catalog of published essays written by Marshall McLuhan

Preface

For several decades now, I have been assembling a database of McLuhan's gems – the zingers, quips, aphorisms and the finest, tightly compressed passages from his writings -- into an organized dictionary of quotes that I call The McLuhan Marshalling Machine. Awhile ago -- OMG, has it been all of 30 years? – his son Eric and I raided that database for the selections published in *Essential McLuhan* (1995): "A McLuhan Sourcebook: Key Quotations". Eight years later we made a larger raid for the lavishly illustrated quotation anthology that Gingko publisher Mo Cohen produced with designer David Carson, *The Book of Probes* (2003).

More recently, during the enforced isolation of Covid, I got serious about growing the Marshalling Machine to new reaches. With the help of Library Archives Canada, and a diligent research assistant, I built a photocopied history of most of McLuhan's published and unpublished short essays. These often proved so cumbersome to handle, I came to prefer the reprinted versions bound between covers of a book. I have worked from eleven anthologies that have reprinted McLuhan's shorter writings originally published in periodicals. (The final page presents publication information about each of them.) Over 125 McLuhan essays, including a few transcripts of speeches and lectures, can be found in these anthologies, which range from *Explorations in Communication*, 1960 to *On the Nature of Media*, 2016. (Please! If anyone knows of any anthology published in English since 1916,

let me know.)

As a shorthand crib to help me work from the published anthologies, I built a concordance, that is, an alphabetized log of the essays published in those anthologies. I am presenting it here to help anyone track McLuhan's thought through the shorter pieces.

Most of these anthologies are out of print but copies can often be found either in libraries or through such networks of used booksellers as Thriftbooks and Abebooks. It was an original promise of Amazon and its Kindle that, with e-books, nothing need ever again go "out of print," – or, in our expanding e-universe, out of reach. That promise has not been kept. It seems to have become a standard for e-books that most remain as durably accessible as the flashings of a lightning bug. Perhaps the problem lies with the habits of the publishing industry. In his mind-awakening *Human as Media* (2014), Andrey Miroshnichenko says that the potential for self-publishing is as historically decisive a revolution as Gutenberg's original printing press. At the author's choice, any book that author has written can be made into a staple and stable e-book that could last, in theory, forevermore.

With the exception of *Understanding Me* and its transcripts of Fordham lectures and several speeches, these anthologies do not include transcripts of the many hundreds of extant recordings of lectures, addresses, speeches, and interviews. With quality AI transcription services available, that situation should soon change. Transcripts should be published, minimally, online.

To my knowledge, the residual number of recordings online or in accessible archives and collections should number at least 150. The published and unpublished essays -- for which, again to my knowledge, no authoritatively complete bibliography yet exists -- probably come to something like

800. A truly exhaustive bibliography is a late if slow start to that overdue larger project that – he said with fingers crossed -- we should see emerging within the next decade. I find it a rueful but telling aspect of the McLuhan legacy that no *Collected Works* is yet in the works -- certainly nothing akin to the magisterial 30-volume *Collected Works of Northrop Frye*, so authoritatively published by the University of Toronto Press between 1996 and 2012. - William Kuhns

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